



Spring 2017
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AMBS window

I See You Are (ICUR)

Building intercultural competence and undoing racism at AMBS

How can institutions work at increasing intercultural competence and undoing racism with tangible results? While Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) began to work at intentionally increasing intercultural competence as an institution in the 1990s, the seminary's approach to the priority has become more systematic in the last eight or nine years, said **Nekeisha Alayna Alexis**, who serves as Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism (ICUR) coordinator in addition to her work as graphic designer and web specialist.

"It doesn't matter what ministry you're in; you can't go anywhere without needing to know how to work with similarities and differences, especially if you're going to be a leader," she said. "We think that we should know how to act, but it isn't enough to say 'yes' to Jesus to transform our relationships. We actually have to learn these skills and develop and practice them in order for them to be part of our Christian character."

Alexis is part of AMBS's eight-member **Intercultural Competence and Undoing Racism team**, which consists

of administrators, teaching faculty, staff and students. Two team members are qualified administrators of the **Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)**, a tool to aid the seminary in its strategic plan of building intercultural competence and undoing racism throughout the institution.

The team has adopted a three-fold approach to working for institutional change at the seminary and creating a learning community where all voices and experiences are valued: **structural** — addressing how the learning community is organized at the level of policy and practice; **educational** — examining what is taught and how it is taught at the curriculum level; and **relational** — coordinating experiences to deepen understanding and strengthen interactions with others around these issues.

"We see intercultural competence and undoing racism as working in concert together," Alexis said.

An example of a **structural** change is that the ICUR team recently rewrote the seminary's grievance policy, which had not adequately accounted for different

cultural values in relation to conflict, or issues of power imbalances. The new policy is more flexible, allowing grievants to enter the process at different levels, depending on the situation, instead of following a strictly linear approach. The team also called for the formation of a standing grievance team to assist with conflict as needed. Members represent different departments and have been trained in conflict mediation by the Center for Community Justice in Elkhart.

The ICUR team also participates in faculty and administrator search processes, and student employment practices have been changed to ensure greater fairness in hiring for campus jobs, Alexis said.

At the **curriculum** level, ICUR discussions now take place during the orientation courses that all incoming students take at the seminary, said **Andy Brubacher (continued on p. 2)**

Photo: Nekeisha Alayna Alexis (at right) and Andy Brubacher Kaethler lead an ICUR workshop at Pastors Week in January. Credit: Jason Bryant

(continued from p. 1) **Kaethler**, assistant professor of Christian formation and culture and a member of the ICUR team.

“As a teacher I’ve noticed that since we’ve been intentional about talking about intercultural competence and racism during orientation, the fruit of that work has come out in classes many times over,” he said. “We are better at listening to each other and being curious. Instead of jumping to conclusions, we are better at extending grace and considering others’ intentions. We are more aware that people have different styles of interaction and processing.”

“I see how this work affects our conversations immediately and in the long term as well,” he continued, adding that even though the contexts where students eventually serve may look different than AMBS’s context, they will still be able to apply their learnings and their “way of paying attention.” Since AMBS serves students from countries around the world in addition to the U.S., people from many different backgrounds benefit from the ICUR work.

Jen Shenk, a Master of Arts in Christian Formation student from Goshen, Indiana, said that she’s found many opportunities to grow in intercultural awareness since her orientation in June 2016.

“I don’t typically engage in political agenda on social media, but I felt compelled to do so in several instances as a matter of solidarity and integrity,” she said, noting that she posted on topics such as the Syrian refugee crisis and the Black Lives Matter movement. She also contacted government and law enforcement officials about their treatment of Dakota Access Pipeline protesters.

“I think my orientation class was a wonderful starting point, and had I not participated in the IDI, I’m not sure I would have been emboldened to take action,” she said. “Prior to this year, I had always felt those things were wrong, but I was overwhelmed and paralyzed, not knowing if anything I could do would make a difference.”

Shenk said she and her husband, Jeff, also began discussing issues of injustice, discrimination, white privilege and power with their children and praying together both for those in power and those who are marginalized and oppressed.

“Even though the needs still seem so massive and overwhelming, I feel like I am taking important small steps to go beyond awareness and take action within my realm of influence,” she said.

Relationally, the ICUR team organizes Martin Luther King, Jr. Day events every other year, with an increasing emphasis on making these events accessible to and relevant for people in the wider community. The team also hosts Race and Media Discussion Circles for the AMBS community to provide healthy spaces for dialogue around intercultural and race-related issues.

Alexis and Brubacher Kaethler noted the importance of being grounded in one’s ICUR work and not losing focus; finding people to collaborate with; setting short- and long-term goals; and celebrating all progress, even small steps.

“Growth in ICUR is do-able,” Alexis added. “It’s not mysterious to the point that we can’t make tangible and concrete changes to move forward.”

To learn more about AMBS’s ICUR team, see ambs.edu/about/icur. ●
— *Annette Brill Bergstresser, AMBS*

ALUMNI NEWS

Ken Reddig (MDiv 1974) was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award for more than 25 years of archival service for the Archives of Manitoba; the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Winnipeg; and the Mennonite Heritage Centre for Mennonite Church Canada.

Mark Winslow (MDiv 1979) has served for 20 years as a prison chaplain for the Arizona Department of Corrections. In that role, he does spiritual healing counseling, leads weekly Bible studies and works with faith-based transitional living and discipleship training programs.

Steve Thomas (MDiv 1989) of Goshen, Indiana, has been named the new coordinator for Mennonite Men.

Bruce Yoder (MDiv 1999) defended his doctoral dissertation at Boston University School of Theology on the impact of Mennonite Mission Network’s approach of honoring the Christian expression of African initiated churches. Bruce and his wife, **Nancy Frey** (MDiv 1999), have served in West Africa since 2000.

Cyneatha Millsaps (MDiv 2008) has been named program director for Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes. She is currently pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Illinois.

Ginny Martin (MACF 2010) began as ministry assistant at St. Mark’s United Methodist Church, Goshen, Indiana, doing pastoral care visits, substitute preaching and communications.

Sarah Thompson (MDiv 2011) was the speaker for Goshen College’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observances. ●

AMBS Window Spring 2017

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3003 Benham Avenue
Elkhart IN, 46517
574.295.3726
advancement@ambs.edu

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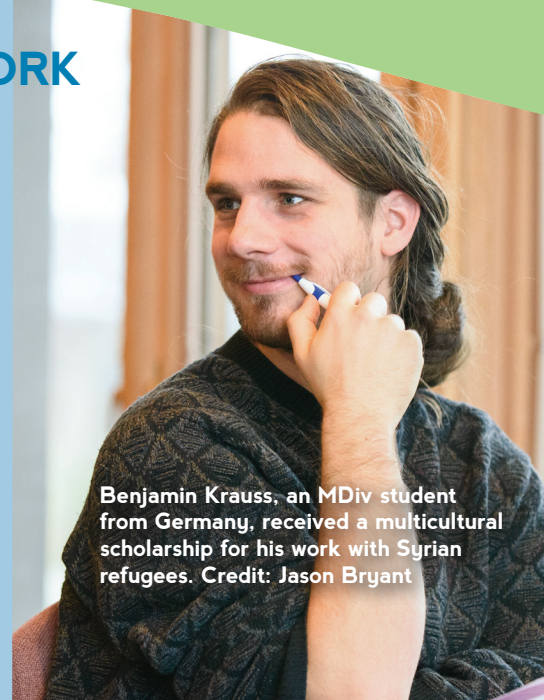
A seminary of
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Mennonite Church Canada

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

AMBS offers multicultural scholarships each year to students of any background who are intentionally preparing to minister in contexts with racial and ethnic diversity. The scholarships are of varying amounts and are given in addition to need-based grants.

“We’re trying to make theological education a priority for everyone, and in order to bring the good news to the widest range of people groups, we’re encouraging people to minister in cross-cultural contexts,” said Daniel Grimes, director of admissions and financial aid for AMBS.

The application deadline is **April 1**.
ambs.edu/admissions/scholarships



Benjamin Krauss, an MDiv student from Germany, received a multicultural scholarship for his work with Syrian refugees. Credit: Jason Bryant



Opportunities to engage cross-culturally

The Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament, and Transformation

June 1–9, 2017

This nine-day pilgrimage traces the route of the 1838 forced removal of Potawatomi people by the U.S. military from their ancestral homeland in northern Indiana to present-day Osawatomie, Kansas. Pilgrims will remember the history of this expulsion through reading journals from the removal, prayerfully walking a few miles of the route each day and meeting with descendants of those who were deported. Pilgrims will examine what it means to inhabit lands from which others were expelled, what priorities and theologies fueled that expulsion and what it means to seek God's *shalom* in our moment and place in time.

Leaders: **Katerina Friesen** (above center), adjunct professor; **George Godfrey** (Citizen Potawatomi Nation), president of the Potawatomi Trail of Death Association; and **Rich Meyer**, historian and educator.

The course can be taken for credit or audit. ambs.edu/trailofdeath

Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations

June 12–30, 2017

Islam has become a major factor in public discourse, but the level of this discourse is often very superficial. As Christians live side by side with Muslims in today's global world, it has become imperative for Christians to wrestle seriously with the Islamic tradition in order to support and participate with both Muslim and Christian communities in their struggles with the meaning and import of Islam.

With an eye on challenges facing the Muslim community today, this two-credit-hour course examines foundational Islamic narratives and texts — including the Qur'an and the Prophetic Tradition — and how Muslims have interpreted these in law, doctrine and spirituality through the centuries. Students will also discuss gender issues; Muslim-Christian relations; and the emergence of contemporary Muslim movements, including ISIS; and will examine case studies from the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, North America and Western Europe. This will inform discussion of a way

forward in Christian witness and service among Muslims.

Instructor: Jacqueline Hoover (above) is a teaching affiliate in Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations at the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. She has also taught in Egypt, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sudan, Germany and the U.S., and she lived for almost 20 years in the Arab world. Originally from Switzerland, she is a minister in the Mennonite Church and currently lives in England.

ambs.edu/academics/islam-and-christian-muslim-relations ●

Top left: Katerina Friesen (center) with Robert "Bob" Pearl and his daughter, Janet Pearl, from Cleveland, Ohio, during the 2015 Trail of Death course. Bob and Janet are descendants of Potawatomi who were on the Trail of Death.

Below: Participants in the 2015 course at the Sugar Creek Mission near Parker, Kansas. The crosses record the names and ages of 600 Potawatomi who died at the mission and are buried there.

Credit: Janeen Bertsche Johnson



AMBS PANORAMA



PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

SARA WENGER SHENK

From every tribe and nation

I liked belonging to a tribe. Admittedly, we never called it that. But in many respects, the Swiss-German Mennonite subculture I grew up in felt like a tribe to me. We knew who belonged by how we dressed, the food we ate and the songs we sang. We knew what our favorite Scriptures were, who our ordained leaders were and why we were different from “the world.” We knew who was in or out and who was allowed to participate in communion and foot washing, or not. I liked the way the tribe gave me an identity. It formed me daily in practices, language, songs and skills that serve me well to this day.

The odd thing is that, while I was born in Ethiopia, thousands of miles away from my tribe’s home base, I still felt like one of the tribe — with one major difference. I knew from the beginning that our tribe was one among many. Growing up in Ethiopia gave me a powerful sense of how spectacular it is to be one small tribe in a multitude of tribes “from every

nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb ...” (Rev. 7:9).

Yet even more revolutionary were the Bible stories my tribe taught me — stories that put me on notice that my tribe was also flawed, arrogant and selfish, particularly when it thought of itself as more special and pure than other tribes. Over the years, the evidence of the evil, dark side of our tribal self-righteousness piled up, undermining the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose ardent prayer was “that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me ...” (John 17:23).

I value tribes that form us in language and practices of faith but only when they also form the capacity to know in our bones that it is Christ who “is our peace ... and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us ... that he might create in himself one new humanity” (Ephesians 2:14-15), from every tribe and nation. ●

LOOKING FORWARD



Webinar: Intercultural Leadership in Diversity-Oriented Churches

Thursday, March 23
2–3:30 p.m. EDT

A. Brian Leander, Ph.D., a church planter, researcher and the assistant director for the Center for Nonprofit Leadership at Adelphi University in Garden City, New York, will introduce the concept of “cultural intelligence” and the Cultural Intelligence Scale. He’ll invite participants to consider how leadership makes a difference in valuing and cultivating diversity in congregational and organizational life. ambs.edu/webinars

Webinar series: Major Challenges Facing the Contemporary Church

Greg Boyd in conversation with AMBS faculty members

Thursdays, 2–3:30 p.m. EDT

March 16: Migration and Pentecost

April 20: Creation in Travail and Creation Renewed

May 25: Conflict, Oppression and *Shalom* ambs.edu/webinars

Pastors Week 2017 audio

Listen to sessions from Pastors Week. The January event focused on the topic, Cultivating Intercultural Leadership for Diversity-Oriented Churches: soundcloud.com/followambs

Anabaptist Short Course: Transforming Congregational Conflict and Communication

April 12 – May 23

Explore the possibilities and pitfalls of courageously engaging in differences within congregational life in this

online, six-week non-credit short course. Instructor: Betty Pries, CMed, MTS, Ph.D. candidate. CEUs available. ambs.edu/anabaptistshortcourses

Rooted and Grounded A conference on land and Christian discipleship

April 20–22 at AMBS

Imagine and embody alternative ways of relating to the land that cultivate *shalom* between human beings, the rest of creation and God. Keynote speakers are Sarah Augustine, Dr. Stanley Saunders and Todd Wynward.

ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded

!Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth

!Explore gives students in grades 10, 11 and 12 an opportunity to explore ministry, develop their leadership gifts and listen for God’s call through a Congregational Experience and a Group Experience (July 11–26, 2017). Apply now! ambs.edu/explore